

**Testimony of Rep. Sharon Anglin Treat  
in support of LD 1152, Resolve, To Continue Consultation and Conditions  
Prerequisite to the Sale and Lease of Certain Real Property in Hallowell” and in  
opposition to portions of LD 955, "Resolve, Authorizing the Commissioner of  
Administrative and Financial Services To Sell or Lease the Interests of the State in  
Certain Real Property Located in Bangor, Boothbay Harbor and Hallowell"**

**April 8, 2013  
State & Local Government Committee**

Senator Lachowicz, Representative Graham, and members of the State & Local Government Committee. I am Sharon Treat, and I represent House District 79, Hallowell, Farmingdale & West Gardiner.

Current law authorizes the State to sell or lease certain real property in the City of Hallowell known as the “Stevens School property.” This property consists of about 64 acres in the middle of town (off Winthrop Street) of which 35 acres are open space. The property in question has about 14 buildings on it. Included within this property is the Stevens School, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Maine Industrial School for Girls Historic District on April 22, 2003. The historic district is comprised of five historic buildings clustered around a central green space.

Legislation to authorize sale of the larger Stevens property was first passed in 2003 and has been updated over the years because the property in question has not, in fact, sold. At the time sale was first authorized, the State was completing a master plan that envisioned moving state offices from the Stevens complex to other properties in and around Augusta. Most of those moves have been carried out, so that the remaining State functions are now the Pre-release Center, slated to be closed later this month; and the Department of Marine Resources, the Conservations Corps and the Service Center, all of which I understand from BGS are slated to be moved by Summer 2014.

Also on the property is the Reed Center, the building that houses the Superintendent’s office for RSU2, which is leased from the State by the terms of current law through June 30, 2015. The RSU, which in addition to Hallowell includes the towns of Farmingdale, Dresden, Richmond and Monmouth, and the SAD preceding it, it has been a tenant at the Reed Center for at least 9 years, and during that time the RSU has invested significant funds in the upkeep and improvement of the property.

Since 2003, the State, through the Bureau of General Services, has worked collaboratively with the City of Hallowell to insure that the sale of this property is accomplished in a manner that respects the City’s interests while still allowing the State to carry out its master plan and also meet its financial goals in reducing its costs for state office space and realizing any possible profit from sale of the land. Over many years, City of Hallowell councilors, mayors and city managers, as well as school district representatives and the state legislators for the area, have been partners with BGS in reviewing the state’s master plan and later the RFP for sale of the property. That collaborative role, as well as the

continuation of the lease for the RSU offices, has been memorialized in a series of resolves, the most recent of which was enacted in PL 2011 Chapter 99 (LD 1584) which is attached to my testimony.

PL 99 remains law; it is not tied to nor does it amend any other prior law or resolve; instead it simply attaches a set of conditions to any property authorized for sale “that is located in the City of Hallowell Tax Map 6, Lot 27 consisting of 63.5 acres, more or less.” In other words, the Stevens property. Chapter 99 lays out not only a list of specific reservations by the City or conditions on the property, but it also formalized a stakeholder process for consultation between BGS, the City and other stakeholders.

**Opposition to LD 955.** The reason that I am here today to oppose LD 955 is the legislation in its first sentence provides that “notwithstanding any other provision of law” BGS has authority to sell or lease the Hallowell property without regard to our collaborative relationship or the several provisions that have been part of law or practice since 2003.

The City has no objection to the continued authority of BGS to sell the property or portions of it, nor is it taking any position on Section B-7 concerning where funds from proceeds of any sale are deposited. We are concerned that this legislation negates the continued use of the Reed Center by the RSU2, which will be harmed financially and its education programs affected negatively, and also that it essentially repeals provisions that are critical to the City’s interest and that to some degree have been part of the sale process since 2003.

From the City’s point of view, the critical provisions are (1) reserving a portion of the property for municipal uses; (2) providing for the RSU2 office space; and (3) reserving a portion of the property for open space. Current law also provides for the preservation and rehabilitation of the 5 buildings designated as historic properties; the Maine Historic Preservation Commission was an active participant in the state comprehensive planning process, the development of the RFP for sale of the property, and the Stevens School stakeholder group, and prior resolves reflect this participation and expertise.

I am very encouraged by recent meetings between BGS and the City of Hallowell that I have attended. I understand that BGS is willing to negotiate with the City about the property, and see how the interests of the State and the City and RSU can be accommodated so that we all come out of this with what we need. The Hallowell City Council meets tonight on this matter, and further meetings between BGS, legislators and stakeholders are planned for Friday. Thus my hope is that this committee will carve out of LD 955 the provisions relating to Hallowell, so that the rest of the bill can proceed without a hitch, and so that BGS and the City may continue to negotiate.

This deliberative approach is made more feasible because I have sponsored LD 1152, which would provide the committee with another legislative document it could use to memorialize any changes to current law to reflect any changes agreed to between BGS, the City and the RSU.

**Support for LD 1152.** As I have pointed out, the conditions previously adopted for sale of the Hallowell property are current law. Legislation is not needed to update them except with respect to the RSU2 lease, which otherwise expires in 2015. LD 1152 would extend that lease for two years. In addition, the bill extends the stakeholder process to insure consultation with the City regardless of whether the property is sold through an RFP process as previously envisioned, or in a different manner. Current law only refers to the stakeholder process with respect to the RFP, which I understand the State has not been using in its efforts to sell the property.

LD 1152 also provides this committee an opportunity, if BGS and local interests can agree, on how the property should be handled in the future. My conversations with BGS lead me to believe that there is a possibility that current negotiations could result in a variety of outcomes for this property. It is important that we give BGS, the City and other stakeholders the time they need to have those conversations and negotiations. Ultimately, an outcome that all can agree on, developed through negotiation rather than legislative fiat, is best for all concerned. Thank you for your consideration.